

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Lower East Side News: November 2003

Velázquez Includes Small Business in Rebuilding of Iraq

Congresswoman Nydia Velázquez successfully included a provision in the \$87 billion Iraq/Afghanistan spending bill recently considered by the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure small business participation in federal contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq.

"This amendment is meant to address the well-publicized fact that the Bush administration has awarded billions of dollars in mega-contracts to a handful of politically-connected U.S. corporations on a no-bid basis," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "These contracts were not open to fair competition – they were doled out in secret backroom negotiations. This amendment I offered will give small businesses a chance."

The Velázquez amendment requires all large corporations that receive contracts for the Iraq reconstruction to have a subcontracting plan in place on how they will make contracting opportunities available to domestic small businesses. Under current law, while large corporations are required to have a subcontracting plan for contracts performed in the U.S., there is no such requirement for contracts performed abroad. This amendment would require that overseas contracts be held to the same standards for small business opportunities as those carried out domestically.

"For years, the federal government has skirted its responsibility to small businesses by not requiring any portion of the billions and billions of federal dollars that flow overseas to go to them," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "My amendment changes this and puts some much-needed equity into the contracting process."

Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy. They account for 97 percent of all employers, provide 75 percent of all new jobs, and make up half of our GDP. Unlike their corporate counterparts that shed jobs in tough times and move operations overseas, small businesses create the majority of new jobs added each month to our economy.

Congresswoman Velázquez opposed the Bush administration's unilateral rush to war and voted against the latest \$87 billion Iraq spending bill but said, "if we are going to spend this money, we need to recognize that funneling it solely to large corporations will not only hurt small businesses, and likely squander taxpayer dollars, but it will also hinder our ability to get our economy back on track. What this amendment means is jobs at home and a chance for many of our communities to move towards economic recovery."

St. Vincent's Chinatown Clinic Celebrates Annual Health Fair

St. Vincent's Chinatown Clinic recently held its 11th annual health fair in conjunction with the Episcopal Church of Our Savior. Congresswoman Velázquez was the official guest who cut the ceremonial ribbon to kick off the fair.

"This fair is so critical to the health and well-being of Chinatown residents," Congresswoman Velázquez said.

The health fair is a community partnership which offers local residents of all ages a variety of services including, glucose and cholesterol screenings, nutrition counseling, free flu shots for seniors and free vitamins for children, as well as a host of information on health care subjects and special kids activities.

The Asian American population is growing in New York City and across the country, with the Census Bureau predicting that this segment will make up nearly 10 percent of the total U.S. population by 2050. Although Asian-Americans suffer from the same health problems as the population at large, they also experience higher rates of certain illnesses, like liver and lung cancer, tuberculosis, hepatitis B, and depression. But no matter what the disease, many Asian-Americans receive less than quality care.

"That's because of language and cultural barriers and inadequate access to health care and insurance coverage," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "It's places like St. Vincent's Chinatown Clinic and its annual health fair that tear these barriers to care down! Now more than ever, with the number of uninsured on the rise and many families in Chinatown struggling to make ends meet, St. Vincent's Chinatown Clinic fills an important gap in health



President Ling Sing Association of East America, York K. Chan, President CCBA Ting Din Ng, Congresswoman Velázquez, Archdeacon of Episcopal Diocese of NY, Michael Kendall and President St. Vincent's Hospital, Jane Connorton.

care. St. Vincent's doesn't turn people away – it welcomes them and helps them."

In these tough economic times, many valuable health organizations are operating on shoestring budgets and working hard not to compromise patient care. That is why Congresswoman Velázquez helps local organizations, like St. Vincent's Chinatown Clinic, tap into federal funding for an array of health care initiatives and services.

Velázquez Addresses Housing Issues at CHCI Conference

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) recently hosted its annual issues conference during Hispanic Heritage Month entitled, "Ascending to New Heights." As Chair of the Business and Economic Development Task Force of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC), Rep. Velázquez chaired a full day of discussion, including a session focusing on homebuyer education, and specifically, on predatory lending, which affects many working families – both across the country and in New York City.

"As we all know, increasing homeownership is one of the most laudable goals a community and, indeed, a nation, can pursue," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "It opens up the doors of opportunity to families in all neighborhoods and ensures that generations have the security they need to build successful lives. Predatory lending is a threat to this pursuit, forcing families to declare bankruptcy because of their inability to pay their mortgage, often times breaking them apart and crushing their dreams for economic stability."

The housing session was attended by lenders, housing and community advocates and legislators, and addressed the issue of predatory loan practices, which are

prevalent in New York. Such practices that include financing excessive fees, inflating interest rates, and making loans without regard to the borrower's ability to pay, can devastate vulnerable communities. In addition, many New York City families that fall victim to predatory lending qualify for loans at significantly lower rates. Some of the discussed solutions included bringing lenders, advocates and policymakers together to create safeguards, and creating lending guidelines, increasing homebuyer education and ensuring that the state plays a role in preventing predatory lending.

"Addressing predatory lending is critical to the growth of homeownership in our nation," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "As all of us here must continue to work together to find viable solutions to this issue. What we heard during the discussion was an important first step in making decisions about a strategy to fight predatory lending."

The mission of the CHCI is to develop the next generation of Latino leaders by offering educational and leadership development programs, services, and activities that promote the growth of conference participants.

N.Y. Minority-Owned Businesses Speak Out in Washington

Several New York small, minority-owned businesses attended the second annual Minority Business Summit that was held on Capitol Hill and hosted by Congresswoman Velázquez and her Democratic colleagues on the House Small Business Committee.

"Today our nation is facing tough economic times with 3.3 million private sector jobs lost since the start of the Bush administration," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "The most important job creator in the U.S. is small business, and this includes minority-owned enterprise. But minority businesses, like many small firms, are struggling – they need our help."

At the summit, several important issues for minority-owned companies were discussed – federal contracting, progress made on President Bush's small business agenda, and access to capital. In an attempt to continue working on their legislative agenda, those participating minority business leaders made recommendations on how to revive our sagging economy through small business development.

"During our discussion today, we were able to bring the focus in Washington back to the minority business agenda," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "I believe in the power of minority businesses – they will play an integral role in turning the current economic situation – both in New York City and across the nation – around."



Congresswoman Velázquez and her Democratic colleagues at the Minority Business Summit in D.C.

More than 70 minority businesses and organizations from across the country joined the Democratic Members of the House Small Business Committee. A report with the final recommendations made at the summit will be released by the House Small Business Committee Democrats later this year.

Summer Internships Provide Hispanic Youth Behind the Scenes Look at Congress

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI), the nation's leading Hispanic non-profit and non-partisan educational organization, is now accepting applications for its summer internship program. For more than 25 years, CHCI has developed the next generation of Hispanic leaders through its educational and leadership development programs, services, and activities.

Each year, 30 promising Hispanic undergraduates are selected for CHCI's eight-week summer internship program in the nation's capital. CHCI interns work in congressional offices

assisting staff in a variety of duties, while gaining first-hand experience in the processes that develop national policy. CHCI provides interns with housing, a \$2,000 stipend, and domestic round-trip transportation.

Application deadline is January 31, 2004. The applications can be accessed online by visiting, www.chciyouth.org, or by contacting the Institute at 1-800-EXCEL-DC. For more information on CHCI visit www.chci.org.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Department of Education

Community School District -- \$175,000

to expand upon the foreign language programs at the Shuang Wen School and the Island School

Department of Education

Grand Street Settlement -- \$305,000

to improve technology center for disadvantaged residents

Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal -- \$914,365

for a HUD program that helps assist families to obtain employment and self sufficiency

Department of Housing and Urban Development

NYC Department of Housing and Preservation and Development --

\$14,786,335

to eliminate lead-based paint hazards and the risk of childhood lead poisoning

Department of Health and Human Services

Fund for the City of New York -- \$5,000,000

for a bio-terrorism hospital preparedness program

Department of Health and Human Services

NYC Administration for Children's Services -- \$498,834

to improve the health and well-being of children in the welfare system by strengthening family relationships